

May 17, 2012 | by USCIRF

WASHINGTON, DC – President Obama and Speaker of the House John Boehner each have announced one appointment to the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF). On May 11, 2012, President Obama announced his appointment of the Reverend William J. Shaw to his second term on USCIRF. President Obama appointed Reverend Shaw on June 2010 to serve his first term.

On May 15, 2012, Speaker of the House John Boehner announced his appointment of Elliott Abrams to USCIRF. Mr. Abrams was a Commission member for three years beginning in 1999, serving as chair from 2000 to 2001.

“USCIRF welcomes these appointments,” said Ambassador Jackie Wolcott, Executive Director of USCIRF. “Both Commissioners Shaw and Abrams made significant contributions to USCIRF’s work during their previous service on the Commission. We look forward to their continued contributions in helping USCIRF fulfill its mandate of highlighting serious threats to religious liberty throughout the world and making policy recommendations to the President, Secretary of State, and Congress on behalf of the cherished right of freedom of religion or belief and its fuller integration into U.S. foreign policy and national security.”

The Reverend William J. Shaw has served as Pastor of the White Rock Baptist Church in Philadelphia since 1956. Reverend Shaw served as President of the National Baptist Convention, USA Inc. from 1999 to 2009. He currently sits on the Board of the Hospital of the University of Pennsylvania and has served as President of The Baptist Ministers' Conference of Philadelphia and Vicinity, The Metropolitan Christian Council of Philadelphia, and the Union Theological Seminary National Alumni Association. From 1981 through 1994, he served as Director of the Ministers' Division of the National Congress of Christian Education.

Elliott Abrams is a lawyer and foreign policy expert who served in the administrations of Presidents Ronald Reagan and George W. Bush. From 2005 to 2009 Mr. Abrams served President Bush as Deputy National Security Advisor for Global Democracy Strategy. Mr. Abrams has held many senior positions in the White House and at the Department of State. He is currently a senior fellow for Middle Eastern Studies at the Council on Foreign Relations and a member of the United States Holocaust Memorial Council.

Comprised of nine commissioners, USCIRF is an independent, bipartisan federal body that is principally responsible for reviewing the facts and circumstances of violations of religious freedom internationally and making policy recommendations to the President, Secretary of State, and Congress. USCIRF offers policy recommendations to improve conditions at the critical juncture of foreign policy, national security, and international religious freedom standards. The President and leadership of both political parties in the Senate and House of Representatives appoint USCIRF Commissioners.

To interview a USCIRF Commissioner, contact Samantha Schnitzer at Sschnitzer@uscirf.gov or 202-786-0613.